DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 096 021 PS 007 547

AUTHOR Hasegawa, Pam, Comp.
TITLE What Is Quality Family Day Care?
INSTITUTION Pacific Oaks Coll., Pasadena, Calif.
PUB DATE Oct 72
NOTE 4p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Day Care Services; *Elementary School Students; Emotional Development; *Family Environment; Family Relationship; Flexible Schedules; Interpersonal Relationship; Learning Activities; Parent Participation; Parent Role; Peer Relationship; *Preschool Children; *Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS *Family Day Care

ABSTRACT

This position paper describes several aspects of ideal family day care. The importance of a mother substitute and a "home away from home" in which both preschool and school-age children are free to be themselves is emphasized. The key to an optimal relationship between the natural and day care parents is mutual cooperation, friendship and confidence. Each child has the greatest opportunity to develop emotional maturity if he is placed in a setting which respects and encourages his uniqueness. Flexibility of the day care mother can allow for unusual preferences, sick care and the provision of special adult and peer relationships. In addition, the entire home is an environment for learning, and the advantages of home care are evident in many areas of the child's developmental growth. The individual characteristics of the family day care mother are also important; factors such as her time availability, emotional makeup, abilities, and belief in what she is doing are instrumental in determining the results of her care. (SDH)

ED 096021

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

WHAT IS QUALITY FAMILY DAY CARE?

Relationships Within the Day Care Family

Quality family day care is the open arms, heart and mind of a mother substitute who cares for the young child whose parents are gone part of the day, on a regular basis. It is loving and being loved in a family situation beyond his own; it is having his siblings with him as he would in his own home. It is exploring and molding new relationships with "day brothers and sisters," with relatives and friends of the day care mother, and with children in her neighborhood.

It is having a real "home away from home" where he may be himself, may feel special to other members of a family, and may find out who he really is through interaction with a steady, consistent, small group of other young children who are loved by the same day care mother.

It is being the way he feels when he feels it: shy, loving, frustrated, victorious, angry, cuddly, independent, curious, cooperative, confused, pensive, loud, giggly, artistic...human. It is having the freedom to explore the environment on his own time: a swing to dangle a leg on, a tunnel to wiggle through, a hole to dig, sand to sift, water to blow bubbles in, a box of toys, a shelf full of books, a foamy bathtub, animal songs on the record player. It is, most importantly, the laboratory where the child's introduction to life is continued in the context of a warm and loving family, where he learns to care for, love and feel responsibility for others as well as himself.

Quality family day care is the home where a school-age child feels comfortable after the school day is over. It is the place where he can express his joy or frustration with the events of the day and know that the heart, as well as the ear, of his day care mother is hearing what he has to say. It is where he has the security of a warm reception from his after-school family, and where he is safe and happy until his parents call for him.

Relationship Between the Natural and Family Day Care Parents

Quality family day care offers parents the freedom to stay as long as necessary to chat with the day care mother and relax before taking their children home. It is the children seeing this cooperation and friendship between their parents and the day care mother, and learning from it who shares the responsibility for their growth. It is the place where parents may leave their children for emergency twenty-four hour care, should the need arise, and where they know that their children will be secure even when an unexpected situation keeps them separated for longer than usual.

PS 005247

It is a relationship of confidence between individual parents and the day care mother, where each is respected and treated uniquely, and where problems may be shared and understood. The day care mother, her children, and their families become, in a real sense, an extended family. Because of the day-long, ongoing interaction between day care mother and children, and the close relationship possible between real and substitute parents, parents are able to learn in depth how their children behave when they are away from them. The day mother is responsible for communicating not only the child's behavior, but his spoken and unspoken concerns, so that both mothers can do everything possible to help the child understand himself and mature.

The family day care mother is a flexible person; she respects the individuality of the parents with whom she deals; and should a conflict arise, she respects their values in the handling of their child.

Because of the immeasurable worth of the lives entrusted from one parent to another woman's care, there is reciprocal trust and admiration between the real and substitute mothers; and mutual confidence and encouragement are openly expressed between them.

The Child's Uniqueness in the Family Day Care Setting

Family day care is a wide choice of mother-substitutes, homes, and lifestyles, which make it possible for the natural parent to find a family day care environment compatible with her idea of how her young child should be cared for and which values should shape his upbringing.

The basic premise of the family day care mother is that the child's first years are so important that they should be formed, above all, with love. A corrolary to this is the belief, lived out in practice, that each child is his own self and his uniqueness will be respected and encouraged.

In a warm family setting, the emotional maturity of each child is given the greatest opportunity for development. The child who needs more love and attention can get it, and not feel lost in the crowd. Because feelings may be expressed openly and immediately, each child learns to accept and deal with his own emotions and those of his day family members. Caring and sensitivity are enhanced when anger, joy, frustration, moodiness can be dealt with personally at the time of need.

The family day care mother avoids labeling children; rather she expresses positive expectations and praises the child for both quiet and glorious triumphs. The mood is catching; the other children rejoice, too, in a day brother or sister's accomplishment.

The family day care mother is sensitive to her children's cues, which are answered soon after they are expressed. As a result, there is a lasting closeness between family day care mother and child because their lives have been deeply and intimately entwined.

The family day care mother is flexible to the hours of working parents, some of which are far from the typical nine to five. Some children come at 6:15 a.m. and finish their night's sleep before breakfast; others are taken home at 10 or 11 p.m. to finish their night's sleep. The day care family schedule is flexible and may be continually adjusted so that the needs of each child, as well as the family day care mother herself, are considered. Give and take are keys to keeping a reasonable balance. A nap, for example, can be taken where the child is happiest, at the time when he needs it, providing this does not infringe on the rights of others in the family.

The child has the continual freedom to start and finish projects or activities at a pace comfortable both to him and other family members. He does not live by the clock. Of great importance is the fact that each child has the choice of shaping his time alone and his time with others--a freedom inherent to family membership.

Likes and dislikes in the matters of food, activities and clothes are considered and respected. Decision making can begin very young with such a simple choice as whether to wear the red checked shirt or the blue striped one. At mealtime, a child may have seconds--or thirds. If he is reluctant to try something new, he may help in its preparation and be so proud of his assistance that he cannot resist sampling a bit!

In case of illness, a child in family day care is in familiar surroundings where he may relax and accept direction (i.e., taking medicine, staying in bed) from someone he already trusts. Family day care mothers often meet medical and dental appointments with children. Should there be a special dietary need because of allergy or illness, the day care mother easily provides for it.

It is a place where a boy without a father may relate to a father substitute from time to time, or perhaps to a nearby grandfather. It is the place where an only child has brothers and sisters with whom to learn the struggle of life before he faces it in a kindergarten class of 30 of his peers. It is the place where, through role-playing, he learns and reflects the identities of various members of the family. As one three-year-old child said after the arrival of a new baby at his daytime home, "If I take my teeth out, I will be a baby."

Learning in the Family Day Care Setting

What may be learned in a home situation? Appropriate behavior both in and away from the family, such as at friends' homes, in the library, at the market, or on a trip to the zoo. Confidence in himself as a person, little though he is, who can relate to an ever-wider range of people as he grows up. Safety in life situations, such as walking along the sidewalk next to a traffic-filled street, crossing an intersection, riding in the car, pedaling wheel toys down the block, or swimming in someone's pool. Respect for the privileges, rights and belongings of others, as well as for their special needs: a cast for a broken arm, orthopedic shoes, eye-glasses. Responsibility around the home: discarding banana peels in the wastebasket, dressing himself, helping a younger child button his shirt, setting the table, sponging up spilled juice, picking up toys at the day's end.

The freedom to work on personal, creative activities over a long period of time has been mentioned. There are other advantages to the home setting when it comes to creative learning: materials are available when the light goes on in the child's mind; projects may stimulate different abilities and interests in children of different ages; creative materials may be used in innovative ways, not just in 'book' ways. At 9:30 a.m. on a steaming summer day in the back yard, finger paint may become body paint to be washed off in the wading pool before lunch.

The entire home is an environment for learning. In the kitchen, a child learns how to dismantle and reassemble a metal coffee pot, or how to stack the multitude of pots and pans found on the bottom shelf. In the bathroom, he learns to wash his hands as soon as he can climb onto a stool and turn the faucet on without scalding himself; here he also learns that the toilet is the appropriate place to use when he is old enough physically and emotionally to give up diapers. In the living room he learns that magazines have a home on the coffee table when they are not being read.

Relationships in the home have already been discussed, but there is one aspect which relates directly to learning that may well be mentioned here. A

child frequently brings a truck, doll, wheel toy or book from home. Another child will often assume that anything which crosses the threshold of the day care home is common property. Herein may be found several ways of handling one of life's difficult lessons: In one home the child may either "protect" his toy by putting it in a safe place away from the other children or, if he chooses to have it "down," must be willing to share it from time to time throughout the day. In another home, he may have the right to physically possess his toy all day long and deal with the other children's eagerness to have it shared in some manner agreeable to all the children. Often, as the others allow him the freedom to clutch his precious toy or book, he eventually becomes able to share it. In still another home, a day mother may find that toys brought from home cause continual hassling, and may ask parents to see that the children's personal toys remain at their own home.

A day care mother may refrain from intervening in children's disputes unless someone's safety, physical or emotional, is threatened, because she has learned that conclusions to such struggles are often swifter and more successful when they come through the antagonists themselves than when they are imposed by an adult.

The Family Day Care Mother Herself

The family day care mother realizes her limitations in the number of children she is able to care for, and she has a choice to whether or not to accept a child into her family. Her time, emotional makeup, abilities, and the number of children she already has all play a part in this, as well as her right to decide whether a given child will fit in with the family she has at the moment.

She realizes her worth, believes in what she is doing, and does it well; she knows that the intangible results of her care and love are happy, capable, creative, and, above all, loving children.

* * *

This Position Paper reflects the views of the mothers in the Community Family Day Care Project (Pacific Oaks College), Pasadena, California, and was compiled by Pam Hasegawa.

October, 1972

Distributed by WATCH
(Women Attentive to Childrens' Happiness)
Pacific Oaks College
714 W. California St.
Pasadena, Ca. 91104